

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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FM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4748

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 1695

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINR, IN

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON MRS. GANDHI'S ADVISORS:

WB CHIEF MINISTER,S S.S. RAY

REF: STATE 173782 (ACTION NEW DELHI AND CALCUTTA)

1. RUMORS THAT WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER RAY MIGHT SOON BE NAMED TO A CABINET POSITION IN NEW DELHI, AS HOME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, OR TO SOME OTHER SENIOR POST, MADE THE ROUNDS IN CALCUTTA DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS AFTER THE EMERGENCY. AT THAT TIME RAY WAS SHUTTLING ALMOST CONTINUALLY BETWEEN CALCUTTA AND DELHI. THE SHUTTLING CAME TO AN END IN MID-JULY AND THE REPORT THAT IS NOW GOING AROUND IS THAT RAY WILL STAY IN CALCUTTA AS CHIEF MINISTER AND IS NOT LIKELY TO GET A CABINET APPOINTMENT IN DELHI AT THIS TIME. THE EXPLANATION WE HEAR IS THAT RAY HAS HAD A RUN-IN OF SOME SORT WITH SANJAY GANDHI AND IS NOW NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S INNER CIRCLE. (THERE ARE A LOT OF NASTY STORIES CIRCULATING HERE ABOUT SANJAY.) THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION THAT RAY HIMSELF WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE RECENT TALK ABOUT HIS COMING APPOINTMENT TO A SENIOR CABINET POST AND THAT MRS. GANDHI VIEWED THIS AS AN EFFORT AT SELF-PROMOTION AND WAS NOT HAPPY WITH HIM.

2. OF COURSE IT IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY WHAT THE RUMOR MILL IS PUTTING OUT ABOUT RAY AND IT COULD ALWAYS BE THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN HIS RELATIONS WITH MRS. GANDHI AND THAT

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IT IS SIMPLY BECAUSE HE HAS MORE URGENT BUSINESS HERE THAT HE

HAS NOT GONE TO DELHI RECENTLY. WHATEVER THE TRUTH, RAY IS AN IMPRESSIVE AND EXCEPTIONALLY ABLE FIGURE AND OBVIOUSLY A MAN WITH A FUTURE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN HE CAME TO CALCUTTA IN 1972 AS CHIEF MINISTER HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING A DOGMATIC SOCIALIST. THE SOCIALISM REMAINS BUT SOME OF THE DOGMATISM SEEMS TO HAVE WORN OFF IN RECENT TIMES. RAY RECENTLY TOLD A GATHERING OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES FROM THE CALCUTTA AREA THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO RELY HEAVILY ON THEM TO MAKE THE PRIME MINISTER'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM A SUCCESS. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T PARTICULARLY LIKE THE IDEA RAY WAS READY TO WORK WITH BIG BUSINESS. THE BUSINESSMEN AND INDUSTRIALISTS PRESENT AT THE MEETING REPORTEDLY WERE DELIGHTED BY THIS SHOW OF ECONOMIC REALISM ON THE PART OF THE CHIEF MINISTER.

3. EMBASSY NEW DELHI IS IN A BETTER POSITION THAN WE TO ASSESS RAY'S INFLUENCE ON THE PRIME MINISTER.

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